Vol VIII. Numb. 5

THE OBSERVATOR.

On the taking of Fort St. John, *in* Newfoundland, *by the* French, *thro' Treachery. On the Decay of the* Scotch *Fiſhery; with the Cauſes of it, aſſign'd by their Merchants, &c. who complain of their being deny'd the Encouragement ſtipulated by the Union. The Decay of our Fiſhery muſt naturally occaſion the Decay of our Sea-men, and weaken our Fleet.*

From Saturday, February 12. to Wednesday, February 16. 1709.

Country-m. WE were diſcourſing laſt Day, Maſter, upon ſome of the Grievances complain'd of by our Sea-men, and of Methods to redreſs them; which I take to be highly neceſſary; for by any Thing I can learn, they are like to decreaſe in Number every Day; ſo that tho' the Walls of our Nation be ever ſo good, they will ſignify nothing to us, if we want Men to defend them, as I am afraid we ſhall, if Things go on at the Rate they do.

Obſ. What new Cauſes of Fear have you, *Roger?*

Country-m. But too many, ſaving the Will of God, Maſter. I have ſeen Letters from *Newfoundland*, which give an Account, that a ſmall Number of *French* Men from *Placentia*, not above 150, if I remember right, have made themſelves Maſters of Fort *St. John* in that Country, by Treachery: But I ſhall be able, in a little Time, to give you the moſt remarkable Particulars. In the mean While, the Letters ſay, that except they be ſpeedily reliev'd, we ſhall be outed of all we have left in that Country.

Obſ. I am ſorry to hear it, *Roger.* 'Tis well however, this News is come while our Parliament is ſitting, and have an Opportunity to enquire, whether any that were lately in the Government, or are ſtill in it, had any Notices given them by Merchants, or others, concern'd in that Fiſhery and Plantation, of the Danger it was in of ſuch a Surprize? What Entertainment thoſe Notices met with? Who were ſent to command there? What their known Qualifications were? Who recommended them? And how they behav'd themſelves on this Occaſion.

Country-m. Behav'd themſelves, Maſter! but very ſorrily, I am afraid; for the Letters ſay, one of the Commanders was in Bed a-ſleep, when the *French* came, and that our Soldiers could not come at the Keys, or the Commander could not find them, that they might get Neceſſaries for their Defence; but they were found ſoon enough, to be deliver'd up to the *French*, when they came; and for the Caſtle, I don't hear there was any Governor in it.

Obſ. Fine Doings indeed, *Roger!* I hope our Parliament will find out the Key to unlock the Secrets of this, and other ſuch Pieces of treacherous Management; and that we ſhall not be always left at Madam *Neceſſity*'s Diſcretion to help us out at a Strait; for I am afraid, that Lady, who has help'd us at many a dead Lift, may at laſt grow ſullen, and not think it worth her while conſtantly to relcue People, that will do nothing for themſelves, 'till they are brought to a Pinch.

Country-m. Upon my honeſt Country Word, Maſter, I am afraid of the ſame. *Joan* whiſpers it ſo often in my Ears, that ſhe won't let me ſleep a Nights for't. She ſays, *Husband, you always us'd to tell me, that the* Engliſh *Fleet was the greateſt and beſt in the World; that our Sea-men were the braveſt, and beſt pay'd: But I am afraid,* ſays ſhe, *you have told me a Parcel of Fibs; for I find the* French *do us more Miſchief without a Fleet, by Privateers, Cruiſers, and I don't know what, than we do them with all our great Navy. Why,* ſays ſhe, *can't we take their Plantations as well as they do ours? Why can't we bring Home Plate and Bullion from the* Weſt Indies, *to ſupport King* Charles, *as well as the* French *do, to ſupport the Duke of* Anjou? *Why are not the Addreſſes of our Lords, to have always a conſiderable Squadron at* Jamaica, *&c. better obſerv'd?* And a great deal of ſuch Stuff, Maſter, that ſometimes I am forc'd to make Uſe of my Authority, and bid her ho'd her Peace. Nay, Maſter, when I grow ſleepy and peeviſh, I am apt ſometimes to ſay, *P---x take her for a politick Jade, can't ſhe mind waſhing her Diſhes, and looking after her Maids.* And when ſhe teazes me unreaſonably, I ſometimes wiſh in my Paſſion, there were no politick Huſſies in the Nation; for they have done us more Hurt, than ever they did us Good. One of them ruin'd the brave Earl of *Eſſex*, in Queen *Elizabeth*'s Time; and what Influence ſeveral of them had in following Reigns, we all remember too well. They prorogu'd and diſſolv'd Parliaments at Pleaſure; they ſupported ill Miniſters, and hinder'd the Influence of good Ones; they made our Princes take their Friends for their Foes, and their Foes for their Friends; they made the Whiſpers of little malicious, tricking Fellows, to be more regarded, than the Advice of Parliaments. Pardon me, good Maſter; I am ſometimes apt to fly out in a Paſſion, and ſay, that had I been in Queen *Elizabeth*'s Place, I would have made them taſte the Busk, or in King *Charles* the II.'s Place, I would have kick'd all ſuch politick Jades out of the Nation.

Obſ. Hold, hold, *Roger*, no more on't, leſt the Thoughts of thoſe She-Politicians make me as mad as thou ar't. What other Cauſes have you to complain of the Decay of our Sea-men?

Country-m. Why, Maſter, t'other Day, as I was walking about near *St. Stephen*'s Chappel, I heard ſome Gentlemen whiſper to one another, there's honeſt *Roger*, ſhan't we go and give him a Bottle, and tell him our Grievances, that he and *Joan* may talk them over, as the Cobler of *Glouceſter* and his Wife us'd to do? One of them becken'd to me, Maſter, and ask'd me whether I would go and take a Glaſs with them at *Heaven*, *Hell*, or the *Devil?* I told 'em, I would have nothing to do with the Devil or his Angels, except it were to hand a Pair of Tongs to St. *Dunſtan*, to take them by the Noſe. So away we went to Heaven, Maſter, and I found moſt of the Company were *North Britains*, Part of 'em Merchants, and Part of 'em Parliament-men; but all of 'em filthily troubl'd with the Grumbling of the Gizzard.

Obſ. What was the Matter, *Roger?* I thought the Union would have made them eaſy.

Country-m. Aye, Maſter, ſo they told me they hop'd; and they were ſure it would too, if it were rightly manag'd.

Obſ. What were their Complaints, *Roger?*

Country-m. They complain'd, Maſter, that their Fiſhery ſunk more in 1707, than it did in 1706. and more in 1708, than it did in 1707. and were afraid it would ſink to nothing in Time; that many of their Fiſher-men were reduc'd to Beggary; and

and that abundance of 'em went to *Holland*, and other Countries, for Employment; which would not only ruin their Fishery, but deprive the Navy of *Great Britain* of many an able Sea-man; which, together with the Ruin of our Fishery in *Newfoundland*, Master, makes me to fay, that the Disease is coming to a dangerous *Crisis*, and that none but the Queen and Parliament can apply a speedy and effectual Cure.

Obj. I am sorry to hear of those Things, *Roger*: But did they give any particular Reasons for the Decay of their Fishery?

Country-m. They talk'd of being deny'd Drawbacks and Premiums, and several other Things, that we Country People don't understand. But there's a Paper, Master, that they told me states Part of their Case; and if you please, you and I will talk it over a little.

Obj. Read it, honest *Roger*.

Country-m. They say, Master, that when they came into the Union, they had their Eye principally on the Enlargement of that Branch of their Trade, which might not only be an Advantage to the whole Island, but a constant Nursery of Seamen for our Fleet; that after some Struggle with their own late Courtiers, who I perceive are not much in their Favour, they obtain'd an Amendment to the 8th Article of the Union, thus: 'That for the Encou-'ragement of the Herring Fishing, there should be 'allow'd and pay'd to the Subjects, Inhabitants 'of *Great Britain*, (during the present Allowances 'for other Fish) 10 *s.* 5 *d.* Sterling, for every Bar-'rel of white Herrings which should be exported 'from *Scotland*. They add, that the Reason why 'this was so particularly insisted on, was, That it 'might be plain, and not liable to any Cavil af-'terwards, because having been possess'd of the 'Herring Fishing so long, there was no Reason to 'submit that Matter to any Doubt or Misrepre-'sentation for Time to come, by which they might 'be depriv'd of the Benefit of a Trade that was act-'ually in their Hands; therefore the Argument 'which some make Use of, that there can be no 'Draw-back, where there is no Duty pay'd, is at 'an End, this being intended as an Encourage-'ment to, and particularly express'd so in the 8th 'Article of Union. They accordingly apply'd them-'selves to Fishing, upon the Credit of this Act, 'and exported Herrings and other Fish in the 'Terms of it, and made their Demands of the Ea-'ses, Premiums, and Draw-backs, appointed by 'the said Act, from the Officers of her Majesty's 'Customs in *Scotland*, who not only refus'd to pay 'them, but to grant Debentures for them. Upon 'this, they apply'd themselves here above, but with-'out any Redress. Then last Year they lodg'd their 'Case in Parliament, and petition'd for Remedy, 'according to the 8th Article of the Union; but 'some how or other it was put off 'till the last Day 'of the Session, when their Petition was mov'd to 'be heard, but prevented by some People, whom 'tis needless to name.

Obj. I am truly griev'd, *Roger*, that any Cause of Discontent should be given to the *Scots* at any Time, but much more now, when so many Letters from good Hands there, express there Apprehensions of a new Invasion. However, since those Gentlemen you talk of, think they have Injustice done them, they will certainly bring the Matter before the Parliament, who are the proper Judges of it, and have Power to obtain a Redress. If they have no Right to those Things they demand, 'tis fit they shou'd know so much, that they may n't spend their Time and Money in fruitless Attempts; but if they have a Right, 'tis just that it should be declar'd so, and that those who have hinder'd them from enjoying it, should, if not call'd to an Account for it, be hinder'd at least from obstructing them any further. Besides, *Roger*, if their People cannot fish without those Encouragements, and it be determin'd, that they have no Right to them, they must look out for other Employment. We want Recruits for our Land-Forces, and Sailers for our Fleet, and it were better we should have those Men in our Service, than let them go over to the *French* and *Dutch*, for Want of Bread. You know there's a Set of Men in the World, who have long ago been for making *Scotland* a Hunting-Field, and no doubt but those of arbitrary Principles and restless Passions, would be glad the *French* were the Hunts-men. But her Majesty and the Parliament will take Care to prevent it, and that we shan't have Reason to complain for Want of clean Ships to give those Hunts-men a Chase, and that we shall not have Powder and Ball enough in the *Scotch* Garrisons, to give them a warm Reception when they come.

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☞ Gentlemen, who have any Thing to communicate to the Author of this Paper, are desir'd to direct it to be left with H. Meere, at the Black-Fryar in Black-Fryars, for the Observator, Post pay'd. Where Advertisements are taken in.

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